

DECLARATION OF CONSCIENCE

for the Antelope Valley Union High School District
Board of Trustees

Thursday, 14 March 2019

by Noah Sveiven
in his capacity as Student Trustee

“...instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all.”

—Pericles’ Funeral Oration, from Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*
as translated by Richard Crawley

The conduct of the Board of Trustees has been objectively worrisome for many weeks. Dissent has been dishonored, and procedures have been shirked. A mockery has been made of democracy. Yet improvement is possible.

Since ethically motivated criticism is an aspirational form of love, I hereby publish ten admonitions regarding the Board on which I sit.

To my dear colleagues,

I have written ten admonitions to which we may all aspire.

1. Respond to questions asked in good faith with answers that make sense.
2. Treat disagreement and discussion as prerequisites to wise decisions.
3. Listen to students, who should be our priority, and to the professionals who spend their working lives in the schools of our district.
4. Reconcile the poor decisions of the past.
5. Thoroughly review the agenda before our meetings begin, and ask questions for the sake of an answer—not for the sake of the question itself. True questions end with question marks.
6. Abide procedure and process. Process protects us. Rules and procedures are social goods to be celebrated and obeyed, not nuisances to be shirked.
7. Spend money wisely. A dollar spent on one matter is a dollar not spent on another matter.
8. Vote independently. Consider proposals, and choose for yourself: yea, nay, abstain. You alone should carry the burden. Don’t share that burden. Hoard it. It is sacred. Empower yourself.
9. Do no harm. Stop plotting, and if you are not plotting, then prevent—as best you are able—the reasonable perception of plotting.
10. Be honorable.

Your colleague,

Noah Sveiven
Student Trustee

This Declaration was circulated and released on the 14th of March 2019 at a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Antelope Valley Union High School District.

This Declaration represents Noah Sveiven alone and does not necessarily represent the Board.